ECE Highlights

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE No. 18 June 1993

ENLARGED MEMBERSHIP AND TRANSITION PROBLEMS POSE NEW CHALLENGES TO UN/ECE AT ITS FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

On the podium during the Commission's annual session are, from left to right, Mr. Gerald Hinteregger, Executive Secretary of UN/ECE; Ambassador William Rossier, Chairperson, Mr. Brian Duke, Secretary of the Commission; and Mr. Matti Heimonen and Mr. Adam Skrybant, Rapporteurs.

The forty-eighth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, held from 19-27 April, took place at a time which was characterized by ongoing profound changes in the region, economic recession in most of the market economy countries in the West and a growing awareness of the daunting dimensions of the problems faced by the countries in transition to market economies in central and eastern Europe.

Delegations observed that since the Commission's last session the process of change in the region which had begun in 1989 had continued unabated, still posing new challenges to regional cooperation. Many delegations underlined the need to address these issues collectively with the aim of finding cooperative initiatives and solutions to the political, economic and social problems confronting UN/ECE member countries. These ongoing economic and political changes continued to offer significant opportunities for important and productive contributions by UN/ECE.

Enlarged membership

One of the central issues addressed by the Commission was the dramatic increase in its membership and the consequences for its work and functioning. At this year's session the UN/ECE membership had reached 45 after the admission of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as well as the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic resulting from the dissolution of the former CSFR. States in Trans-Caucasia and Central Asia are expected to join the Commission after endorsement of their applications by ECOSOC this summer, bringing the membership to 52. It is not only the increasing number of its member countries which poses new challenges to UN/ECE. The very nature of the Commission has changed profoundly. While in the past its analytical work dealt with only eight centrally planned economies, very soon it will have 25 countries in transition among its members, some of which are clearly at the stage of developing countries.

Assistance to countries in transition

Assistance to countries in transition figured prominently in the debate of the forty-eighth session. This subject was of growing importance in view of the fact that almost half of the members of UN/ECE are now countries in transition with their specific needs and priorities. Delegations reaffirmed the valuable role of UN/ECE in assisting the countries in transition, particularly through its programme of workshops and invited governments, the European Community, relevant international institutions and private donors to provide contributions to the UN/ECE Trust Fund which has been established to fi-

nance workshops and similar informal UN/ECE activities. Delegations also stressed the importance of efforts by all industrialized countries to improve access to international markets for products from countries in transition.

Process of restructuring

The forty-eighth session marked a further milestone in the process of the restructuring of the Commission and its adjustment to the changing realities in the region. The process which had begun in 1990 with the adoption of some landmark decisions designating environment, transport, trade facilitation, economic analysis and statistics as the five priority areas of activity, and defining assistance to countries in transition and their integration into the European and world economy as major objectives of the work was supplemented by a decision this year to reform the format of the Annual Session itself. Special features this year included a formal presentation and discussion of the *Economic Survey of Europe* in Plenary, a presentation of selected UN/ECE projects to the Commission and a Round Table with the participation of high-level policy makers from several UN/ECE member countries.

The ongoing reform and streamlining of UN/ECE was considered in the context of the restructuring of the United Nations Organization as a whole. The strengthening of the role of the Regional Commissions in general and the UN/ECE in particular was one of the objectives of the overall Annual Session restructuring initiative. In this connection, the role of UN/ECE within the UN system and its contributions to the preparation of and follow-up to global conferences such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and the upcoming world conferences on population, women and the Social Summit were considered by the Commission.

Adoption of decisions

The Commission adopted 14 decisions at its forty-eighth session dealing with its assistance to countries in transition, its substantive activities, its contribution to global programmes, and the facilitation and clarification of procedures on such matters as membership, the organization of the Annual Session, the role of the Bureau and secretariat resources. Ambassador Bernard Miyet (France) was elected Chairperson and Ambassador L. Dembinski (Poland), Ambassador R. Neagu (Romania) and Ambassador C. Manhusen (Sweden) Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission's forty-ninth session, to take place from 18-25 April 1994.

ECE NEWS BRIEFS

European Population Conference calls for family support measures, immigration policies and increased population assistance

The European Population Conference closed on Friday 26 March 1993 with the adoption of more than 80 recommendations. They, *inter alia*, call for measures that would make it easier for families to bring up children; urge governments to coordinate migration policies; increase support for the economic development of third world countries; and provide more financial support for international population assistance.

The Conference, which was convened jointly by UN/ECE, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), opened on 22 March in Geneva and was chaired by Federal Councillor (Foreign Minister) of Switzerland, René Felber. The recommendations of the Conference will constitute the three organizing institutions' contribution to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) to be held in Cairo in September 1994.

The population of the UN/ECE region — which includes Europe and North America — was described as being in a state of transition. While increasing migration pressures and ageing of the population seem to be the most urgent issues, the emergence of single parent families and non-married couples has become a major social feature. Family planning is still insufficiently developed in some countries in central and eastern Europe. Infant and maternal mortality rates are higher than in western Europe and life expectancy lower and there is a need for improved health care, including reproductive health services.

Many European countries expressed concern over the implications of the ageing of their populations — such as increasing health costs for geriatric care, labour shortages and strains on retirement and pension schemes. While wary of using immigration to adjust the age structure, the recommendations called for more productive roles for the elderly so they can make use of their skills to benefit society.

More than 50 European countries as well as the United States and Canada sent representatives to the Conference, almost 20 of them at the ministerial level. In addition, many population experts and many non-governmental organizations participated. Papers were prepared for the Conference by leading populations experts on the five key themes of the Conference: International Migration; Fertility and the Family; Health and Mortality; Population and Age Structure; and International Cooperation.

New appointments

Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Mrs. Dunja PASTIZZI-FERENCIC, a national of Croatia, has been appointed Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE). Mrs. Pastizzi-Ferencic obtained diplomas in English and French linguistics and literature, in economics and foreign trade and completed post-graduate studies in the theory and policy of economic development at the University of Zagreb.

She has served on advisory boards of various national and multinational bodies and has written a number of publications related to development issues.

Mrs. Pastizzi-Ferencic was appointed as the first Director to set up the UN Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) in 1981. She subsequently served as Director of the Natural Resources and Energy Division, UN Department of Technical Cooperation for Development in 1990 and Director of the Science, Technology, Environment, Energy and

Natural Resources Division, UN Department of Economic and Social Development, in 1992.

New Director for the joint ECE/FAO Agriculture and Timber Division

Mr. Jacques Vercueil, a national of France, was appointed Director of the ECE/FAO Agriculture and Timber Division, effective 1 February 1993. Before his assignment to UN/ECE Mr. Vercueil served as Chief of the Training Service of the Policy Analysis Division at FAO. He is a member of the Association française de cybernétique économique et technique and of the European Association of Agricultural Economists.

UN/ECE participation in Geneva Recycling Fair "RE 93"

Recycling of used materials and the application of low-waste and non-waste technologies have been recognized as important elements of sustainable development at an early stage of the environmental activities of the UN/ECE. Some results were presented at a book-stand during the International Recycling Trade Fair "RE 93" held at Palexpo in Geneva, from 19 to 23 January 1993. A new UN/ECE publication on the "Management of Plastic Wastes in the ECE Region" was presented which describes the current and projected levels of production and consumption of plastics in the ECE region and reviews developments in the reduction, recovery, recycling and disposal of plastic wastes as well as the legislation related to plastic waste management.

JUST PUBLISHED

UN/ECE Economic Survey of Europe analyses development of transition countries and western market economies

According to the *Economic Survey of Europe in 1992-1993*, 1992 was another year of decreasing economic activity in eastern Europe, the fourth in succession. Output dropped by just over 30 per cent. The differences among the transition economies have widened: in some of them, substantial progress has been made in setting up the institutions of a democratic society and a market economy; in others, institution-building is still at a relatively early stage and subject to considerable strains from political fragility and in some cases, from civil war and armed conflict. In eastern Europe unemployment is more difficult to measure than in the west, but all available data point to a rapid increase in joblessness in 1992. At the end of the year some 6.5 million people were registered as unemployed. Unemployment is expected to rise again rapidly as privatization gets under way and bankruptcy laws are brought into effect. Concern at the social implications of this development explains the anxiety to get social safety nets into position and the increasing willingness of western countries to support their construction with technical and financial assistance.

For the economies of Europe and North America 1992 was another disappointing year. The recovery of the United States economy from recession was very slow. In western Europe hopes of stronger output growth proved unfounded. Annual growth was unchanged and there was a sharp weakening of economic activity in the second half of the year.

A closing chapter of the Survey discusses the western response to the transition in central and eastern Europe in aid and trade analysing the financial flows and commitments of assistance as well as east-west cooperation agreements and market access.

Economic Survey of Europe in 1992-1993.
Sales No. E.93.II.E. Price: $US 80.00

World engineering industries in recession

In 1991, worldwide engineering production fell by 1.1 per cent after zero growth in 1990. The decrease was particularly strong in North America and western Europe, where production declined by 3.4 per cent and 2.9 per cent, according to the *Annual Review of Engineering Industries and Automation 1991* published by UN/ECE. The 250-page Annual Review provides detailed analysis of the performance in production, prices, investments, employment, trade and research and development of total engineering industries and its subsectors. The analysis is based on data supplied by UN/ECE member countries as well as from the OECD, industrial organizations, conferences and symposia. Since the first *Annual Review of Engineering Industries and Automation*, published in 1981, UN/ECE has built up a large database of economic indicators for the engineering industries.

Annual Review of Engineering Industries and Automation 1991
Sales No. E.93.II.E.5. Price: $US 50.00

OTHER SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Agriculture and Timber

Timber Bulletin, Vol. XLV, No. 6: *Forest Products Statistics 1987-June 1992* (ISSN 0259-4323).

Forest and Forest Products Country Profile — Poland (ECE/TIM/67).

Environment and Human Settlements

Contribution to the Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" ECE/ENVWA/30 and Add.1.

READEX
FICHE

Statistics

Statistics of Road Traffic Accidents in Europe 1993, Vol. XXXVIII.
Sales No. E/F/R.92.II.E.8. Price: $US 25.00

Annual Bulletin of Steel Statistics for Europe 1991.
Sales No. E/F/R.93.II.E.6. Price: $US 25.00

Annual Bulletin of General Energy Statistics for Europe 1992, Vol. XXIII 1990.
Sales No. E/F/R.92.II.E.11. Price: $US 30.00

Trade

A Guide on Management Requirements and Training for East-West Joint Ventures. English only.

Industry

Directory of Chemical Producers and Products: Chemical Enterprises in Central and Eastern Europe.
Sales No. E.93.II.E.7. Price: $US 85.00

Management of Plastic Wastes in the ECE Region
Sales No. E.93.II.E.3. Price: $US 42.00

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Use of Multifunctional Machinery and Equipment in Logging Operations

22-28 August 1993

A seminar on the Use of Multifunctional Machinery and Equipment in Logging Operations will be held at the invitation of the Government of the Russian Federation in the Olenino Logging Enterprise (Tver region) from 22 to 28 August 1993. It will be organized by the Joint ECE/FAO/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training.

The seminar will review trends and prospects in the development and use of multifunctional logging machines. Top level experts in this field from industrialized countries will discuss technical, economic, environmental and social aspects of the use of various multifunctional machines and machine systems in logging operations. Attention will also be given to training programmes as well as to ergonomic problems. The seminar will be complemented by field trips, planned by the organizers to show various sets of domestically-produced multifunctional forestry machines in demonstration areas and at a testing ground.

OTHER SELECTED EVENTS

1993

June

2(pm)-4	Working Party on Housing Modernization and Management
1-2	Meeting of Experts on Natural Gas Resources
7-9	Joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics
7-11	SENIOR ECONOMIC ADVISERS TO ECE GOVERNMENTS
14-17	Meeting of the Signatories to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents
14(pm)-18	CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS
28-2 July	Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport
29(pm)-30	Working Party on Sustainable Human Settlements Planning

July

5-9	Study Group on Food and Agricultural Statistics in Europe
6-8	Meeting of Experts on Pollution and Energy
12-21	Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods

August

23-25	Working Party on Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS ON ECONOMIES IN TRANSITION

1993

June

1-3	Policy, Investment and Social Aspects of the coal industries in central and eastern Europe.
8-10	Rehabilitation of gas transportation systems in Belarus and the Russian Federation (Minsk, Belarus)
14-17	Market adaptation of energy-intensive industries in central and eastern Europe (Moscow, Russian Federation)
15-17	The recovery of coalbed methane (Donetsk, Ukraine)
22-24	Achievement and future development of cogeneration and district heating (Poiana-Brasow, Romania)
24-25	Energy City, (Besançon, France)
30-2 July	Legal and regulatory framework for environmental management (Sofia, Bulgaria)

August

30-31	Human settlements problems (Vilnius, Lithuania)

For further information, contact:
The Information Officer,
Economic Commission for Europe,
Palais des Nations,
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Telephone: (+41 22) 907 28 93
or 907 26 84
Telex: 41 29 62
Telefax: (+41 22) 917 00 36

ECE Highlights provides a round-up of news and information on major ECE events and publications and is available free of charge from the Information Officer.

Printed at United Nations, Geneva—GE.93-21340—June 1993—3,000—ISSN 1014-3866